



# THE CONNECTICUT PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Virginia Shiller. I am a member of the Connecticut Psychological Association, Past Chair of their Children & Youth Committee, and a Lecturer at the Yale Child Study Center. My testimony is to support the preservation of the Commission on Children.

In January of this year, I attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland with my husband, who is an economist. There, I had the opportunity to chat with Dr. Thomas Insel, Director of the National Institute of Mental Health at a dinner focused on the mental health consequences of the current recession. Dr. Insel told me that NIMH believed children would be the group most severely impacted by a serious economic downturn. I asked what their thinking was based upon, and he said that when children experience stress during their "formative years," it can have a life-long impact. As a child psychologist, this was consistent with my own thinking.

I also discussed with Dr. Insel what kinds of mental health consequences there would likely be, and he agreed when I suggested family conflict and disruption might be a major consequence. In fact, he said that they have found one of the most serious difficulties experienced by returning Iraq soldiers to be family dysfunction.

Does it make sense to dismantle the Commission established to protect the health and welfare of Connecticut's children when we may be entering a period when children may be the victims most severely affected? Who will be monitoring the welfare of our most vulnerable citizens?

As Chair of the Children & Youth Committee, I collaborated with the Commission on efforts to address the problem of bullying in schools. The Commission on Children had originally championed legislation mandating schools to address this very serious problem, and over the past several years have worked valiantly to ensure that schools were adopting the best practices to address this very serious problem. I was extraordinarily impressed by the knowledge, skills, efficiency, and tireless work of the members of the Commission.

I recognize that Connecticut must make hard choices in these difficult economic times. But, government *must* monitor the needs of our children, the adults of tomorrow, and the Commission on Children is an experienced group prepared for this task.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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